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**Writing Techniques for Teachers**

**5 October 2012**

**Interactive Writing Lesson Plan – Prof. Dembroski**

**Grade**: **1st**

# Student Friendly Objective:

# -Students will be able to identify the main characters and their character traits from the story Horton Hatches the Egg in an interactive writing lesson.

-Students will be able to identify the story elements in Horton Hatches the Egg and justify why characters act the way they do.

# Curriculum Objectives:

# Standard 3.0 Comprehension of Literary Text

**Indicator**

* **3.** Use elements of narrative texts to facilitate understanding

**Objectives**

1. Identify the elements of a story, including [characters](javascript:openPopupWH('/share/vsc/glossary/reading/character.html',200,200)), [setting](javascript:openPopupWH('/share/vsc/glossary/reading/setting.html',200,200)), problem, and solution
2. Identify and explain [character](javascript:openPopupWH('/share/vsc/glossary/reading/character.html',200,200)) traits and actions

**Materials:**

* The book Horton Hatches the Egg by Dr. Seuss
* White boards and markers
* Easel, chart paper and markers
* Student’s journals (after lesson)

**Introduction:** (the writing component students will be practicing is spelling in the interactive writing portion and the creation of complete and explanatory sentences in the extended lesson)

* Ask the students to come to the carpet area. Have them sit in rows criss-cross applesauce so everyone can see the book.
* Introduce Horton Hatches the Egg.
  + Show the students the cover.

“Has anyone ever read this story before? For those who have, please do not give away the ending for the new listeners. Can anyone tell me what the title of this story is? Does anyone recognize the author? What other books were written by Dr. Seuss? What do you notice is the same in each book?”

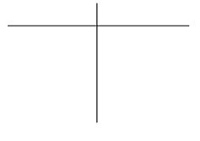
“Today we are going to read this story. As we read, I want you to think about some of the story elements in this book. Can anyone tell me ONE of the story elements? (Looking for characters, setting, problem, and solution; have different students say the different elements until you get all four, assist if necessary)

I would also like you to think, as we read, of the character traits of the main characters in the story. Who can tell me what a character trait is? Can anyone give me an example of a character trait?

Remember what you are supposed to be thinking about as we read. What are you looking for, again?”

**Procedures:**

* Read the story.
  + On first page, ask students if they see a word that could be a character trait on it (Lazy).
  + After two or three pages, once Horton comes in, ask, “What are your first impressions of Horton?” Also ask, “What are some of the things you see in the pictures around the characters (Trees? Snow? Sand?). Where would you find these things (Beach? Dessert? Jungle? City?)”
  + With the “An elephant’s faithful one hundred percent” phrase, ask which word in that statement could be a character trait.
  + When the hunters are taking Horton, ask the students what Horton is feeling (Unhappy, sad, scared). Ask them if being unhappy is a character trait. Discuss the difference between a character trait and an emotion.
* After the story, have a short discussion (no more than two minutes). Ask the students, “Where did this story take place? (Jungle, circus, beach). “What do you think was the problem in this story?” (Horton was left with Mayzie’s egg and cared for it while Mayzie was away being lazy). “How was this problem solved?” (In the end, the baby looked like Horton and stayed with him *because* Horton had worked so hard to hatch it.) If they do not offer the *because* then ask why the baby stayed with Horton.
* Have one student pass out markers to the rest (You get what you get and you don’t get upset) while the rest get white boards, ONE row at a time!
* When everyone is settled say, “Now we are going to make a chart showing the difference between Mayzie and Horton. Watch me make a capital T on my paper, then you will make one on your white boards.” Draw a T on the paper. Tell them to do the same when you finish.
* When everyone has made a T, say, “Now we are going to write the two main character’s names at the top of the T. What were their names again?” Write Mayzie and Horton at the top of the T, one on each side:

**[](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_A0FQf9eGkk0/S99wlTphl-I/AAAAAAAAAK4/UqtpQHcddY4/s1600/Blank_Tchart.jpg)**

Mayzie Horton

- Say the letters aloud as you spell out the names and watch students as they write the names at the top of their boards.

- Say, “Let’s name ONE of the character traits we came up with during the story for Mayzie. Write the trait they say in the “Mayzie” column. Ask, “What is ONE trait we came up with for Horton?” Write the trait they say in the “Horton” column.

-“Now I want everyone to write at least four character traits you could use for Mayzie in Mayzie’s column (point to Mayzie’s column) and four character traits you could use for Horton in Horton’s column” (point to Horton’s column).

* Give students a few minutes (approx. 4-5) to think and write. Walk around to see what they are writing to make sure they are on track and facilitate when needed. Identify the ones who finish early and have them say one of their traits for one of the characters and come up and write that trait in the proper column of the chart paper.
* As the students spell out the words they came up with on the chart paper, have them say the letters they are writing. Have them cross out any errors in spelling with the marker. Do not tell them answers, but assist them with strategies: sound it out, look at the word wall, refer to their white board or a friend’s white board, and/or refer to the text.
* After a few minutes, say, “Markers down. (Make sure they put the caps on the markers). We are going to write some of the traits we came up with on the chart paper. Raise your hand to tell me one of the character traits you came up with and who that trait belongs to: Horton or Mayzie.” When they tell you a trait and who it belongs to, ask them why that trait belongs to that character by giving an example from the story.
* Create a list of at least six traits in each column. Have students raise their hand to share before writing on the chart paper. “Share the pen”.
* As students add traits on the chart paper, have the rest write the traits they do not have on their white boards.

**Summary of Learning:**

After the list is complete, read and go over the meaning of each word the students had come up with. Then ask the students “If you were the baby in the egg, which character would you like more? Which character traits of that character make you like him or her more? (There is no wrong answer, have 2 or 3 students answer). By writing the character traits of Horton and Mayzie, we were able to see the differences between the two.”

**Follow-Up Lesson/Extending Learning:**

Send the students back to their seats to write in their journals three sentences: Which character would you chose if you were the egg and the character traits that explain your decision. You can write a sample on the white board (Model), and turn the T chart so everyone can see it and refer to it for ideas and spelling.

**Assessment:**

* Observe as the students write on their white boards and listen to the explanations the students come up with for the character traits and the other elements of the story. Take notes of:
  + If the students can correctly identify the main characters of the story
  + If the students can correctly identify what the setting, plot, problem, and solution of this story were.
  + If the individual student is coming up with justifiable character traits for the specific characters
  + If the individual student offers plausible explanations and examples of why they think a character trait applies to a certain character.
* Look at the work samples that will be produced in the student’s journals to check for understanding of character traits.

**Justification of the use of Interactive Writing:**

Interactive writing is a strategy that allows students to practice writing in a way that is not only interesting to them, but beneficial in the practice it gives them with language concepts. Concepts practiced when using interactive writing include the correct use of capital letters, spelling, punctuation, and format. Other things can be practiced as well using interactive writing depending on the subject. I used it to further the understanding of the story we read as well as to reinforce the elements of a story – setting, characters, problem and solution. I focused on character traits so the students could get quality practice with identifying what a character trait is as well as coming up with specific vocabulary that fits in that category. However, interactive writing can be used with any subject to further understanding. The possibilities are endless.

By participating in the aspect of interactive writing called “sharing the pen”, students take a stake in what they are writing. They develop meaningful connections between what they are writing and the concept being practiced (in this case, character traits). Later, in my post-lesson, the students will be able to refer back to the list they made to write full sentences. This gives them the opportunity to apply what we practiced (by making the list) by making full sentences that justify what they say. Having a list they wrote themselves allows them to make more connections then if I were to write the list by myself. It is as if I were to teach them how to ride a bike. I could show them how *I* pedal, but they will not truly learn how to do it until they physically do it themselves.

Research has been done that supports the inclusion of interactive writing in a lesson. A study by Kate Roth in the *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* showed gains in several aspects of writing, including generating ideas, organizing words, spelling correctly, and using correct capitalization when interactive writing was incorporated for an average of 10.5 minutes per day (Guernsey, 2012). This result is due to how “sharing the pen” gives the students that vital practice they need, but also allows them to begin to understand the processes of writing – brainstorming, drafting, and finalizing what will be said. They come up with what will be written, and then they write it!

Another important thing to note about interactive writing is how it can target individual development if the teacher uses it correctly. If one of my students is struggling with the spelling of a certain word, that student can practice it with interactive writing. If a student is struggling with spacing, that student can be the “designated spacer” for the interactive writing lesson (Guernsey, 2012) . Any number of things a student is struggling with can be practiced, improved on, and assessed by using this tool. It is also a tool that can be used to determine if a student needs work in a certain area. I can make a note and come up with strategies to assist the child based on what I see during this lesson.

Finally, individual learners are supported by using this tool in my class. Creating a chart in general is a good strategy that allows English Language Learners to have a visual representation and organization of vocabulary, making it easier for them to make connections between words and their written appearances and to write themselves later on. Seeing their ideas and the ideas of their classmates enhances the learning experience, for them and for the students who have English as a first language. By using interactive writing in my lesson I was even easily able to target visual (the chart), linguistic (the reading and writing), logical (the chart), kinesthetic (getting up and writing), interpersonal (group discussion), and intrapersonal (individual work on white boards and journals) styles of learning.

Interactive writing gives students the opportunities they need to practice the concepts I go over with them. It is an important tool for any classroom, as it has been proven to work and targets so many aspects of academic learning and development. It allows a teacher to work on several areas all at once with the students as a whole group and with individual students, giving them a chance to “share the pen” and at the same time, share and expand their knowledge.

Works Cited

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